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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 10/16/07

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ARTICLES:

(1) Poll on Fukuda cabinet, political parties, MSDF refueling

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
October 16, 2007

Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in percentage, rounded off. Bracketed figures denote proportions to all respondents. Figures in parentheses denote the results of a survey conducted Sept. 25-26 unless otherwise specified.)

Q: Do you support the Fukuda cabinet?

Yes 47 (53)
No 30 (27)

Q: Why? (One reason only. Left column for those marking "yes" on previous question, and right for those saying "no.")

The prime minister is Mr. Fukuda 27(13) 11(3)
It's an LDP-led cabinet 21(10) 44(13)
From the aspect of policies 19(9) 36(11)
No particular reason 29(14) 8(2)

Q: Which political party do you support now?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 32 (33)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 24 (25)

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New Komeito (NK) 3 (4)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 3 (3)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 1 (1)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 0 (0)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0 (0)
Other political parties 0 (0)
None 30 (30)
No answer (N/A) + don't know (D/K) 7 (4)

Q: In order to fight terrorist groups in Afghanistan, the United States and other foreign countries have sent their naval fleets to the Indian Ocean. The Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, which is for the Self-Defense Forces to back up their fleets, is to expire Nov. 1. The government will introduce a new legislative measure to the Diet in order for Japan to continue the SDF's activities there. However, the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) is poised to oppose the legislation. Do you support it? (Figures in parentheses denote the results of a survey taken Sept. 13.)

Yes 39 (35)
No 44 (45)

Q: The new legislative measure, which the government will introduce to the Diet, will restrict the SDF's activities to fuel and water supply only. Instead, the bill will not require the government to ask the Diet for its approval of the SDF's activities. Do you support this legislation?

Yes 28
No 48

Q: (Only for those who answered "yes" to the foregoing question) Do you think the new legislation should be enacted into law as soon as possible, or do you otherwise think there is no need to hurry?

Enact as soon as possible 64(18)
No need to hurry 31(9)

Q: The government asserts that the MSDF's activities in the Indian Ocean constitute the international community's efforts to block terrorism and are highly appreciated in the international community, including the United Nations. Is this assertion from the government

convincing?

Yes 34

No 48

Q: The DPJ asserts that the MSDF's activities in the Indian Ocean are not based on any UN resolution and fails to deter terrorism. Is this assertion from the DPJ convincing?

Yes 34

No 44

Q: Do you think the DPJ should find common ground with the ruling coalition in their talks on the issue of the MSDF's activities in the Indian Ocean, or do you otherwise think the DPJ should carry through its standpoint against it?

Talk with the ruling coalition to find common ground 64

Carry through its standpoint against it 22

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Q: Do you think the House of Representatives should be dissolved as soon as possible for a general election, or do you otherwise think there is no need to do so? (Figures in parentheses denote the results of a survey taken Sept. 13.)

Dissolve as soon as possible 32 (50)

No need to do so 60 (43)

Q: Would you like the current LDP-led coalition government to continue, or would you otherwise like it to be replaced with a DPJ-led coalition government? (Figures in parentheses denote the results of a survey taken Sept. 13.)

LDP-led coalition government 33 (33)

DPJ-led coalition government 32 (41)

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted Oct. 13-14 over the telephone on a computer-aided random digit dialing (RDD) basis. Respondents were chosen from among the nation's voting population on a three-stage random-sampling basis. Valid answers were obtained from 2,113 persons (58 PERCENT).

(2) DPJ plans to summon former Defense Bureau Director General Moriya over alleged diversion of MSDF-supplied fuel

ASAHI (Page 2) (Full)

Evening, October 15, 2007

Kenji Yamaoka, chairman of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) Diet Affairs Committee, told a press conference on Oct. 15 that his party plans to ask the Upper House Budget Committee to summon as witnesses former Vice Defense Minister Takemasa Moriya (Defense Bureau director general at the time) and Defense Agency (at the time) officials in charge over the issue of the government having given an incorrect figure regarding the amount of fuel the Maritime Self-Defense Force supplied to a US oiler in 2003.

The government explained in May 2003 that the MSDF supplied 200,000 gallons to a US oiler in March the same year. However, it corrected the amount to 800,000 tons in September this year. Yamaoka said, "We are now convinced even more strongly after investigation that this cannot be a clerical mistake."

Yamaoka also revealed a plan to seek the exercise of investigative powers in national politics in order to get operational documents of the USS Kitty Hawk and USS Paul Hamilton disclosed over the alleged diversion of fuel to the Iraq operation.

DPJ shadow foreign minister Yoshio Hachiro appearing on an NHK TV show said, "Since the prime minister was also responsible for the explanation given by the government at the time, we must consider the possibility of summoning him as a witness, based on the Diet Testimony Law."

(3) Missile training planned for next month to defend capital

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
October 14, 2007

Japan is now gearing up to defend Tokyo against ballistic missile attacks from foreign countries, with its deployment of the Patriot Advanced Capability 3 (PAC-3), a ground-to-air guided missile system

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designed to shoot down ballistic missiles. The Defense Ministry plans to carry out missile defense drills, with the Air Self-Defense Force mobilizing PAC-3 batteries to some locations, including Yoyogi Koen, a park in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward, and Harumi Futo Koen, a park in Tokyo's Chuo Ward. The PAC-3 training is intended to accurately grasp what is in the way of the PAC-3's mobile deployment and how long it will take. It is aimed to ready Japan for emergencies.

Missile defense (MD) anticipates attacks mainly from North Korea. In March this year, the ASDF introduced the PAC-3 to its Iruma base in Saitama Prefecture for the first time.

However, the PAC-3 covers a range of about 20 km. In the heart of Tokyo, there are potential targets like the Imperial Palace, the Diet, and the Kantei. The ASDF's Iruma base, however, is situated about 40 km away. The PAC-3 therefore cannot intercept missiles from the Iruma base, so the ASDF needs to mobilize PAC-3 batteries to Tokyo's downtown areas at a time when there are signs of possible missile launches.

The Defense Ministry is considering Yoyogi, Harumi, and some other locations as candidate sites for the PAC-3's mobile deployment. In addition, the Defense Ministry's list of candidate sites includes the Ground-Self Defense Force's Ichigaya garrison in Tokyo's Shinjuku Ward and the GSDF's Nerima garrison in Tokyo's Nerima Ward. The Ichigaya garrison is where the Defense Ministry is headquartered. The off-base deployment of PAC-3 missiles may have to last a long time. The Defense Ministry therefore selected these locations, thinking it needs to secure spacious places.

The ASDF will actually launch no PAC-3 missiles. However, the Defense Ministry will look into the communication environment of tracking radar needed to intercept missiles. In addition, the Defense Ministry will estimate the incoming trajectory of missiles and will also check the command and control of air defense missile units. Furthermore, the ministry will check to see if there are high-rise buildings standing in the way of PAC-3 intercepts.

The PAC-3's off-base mobilization is expected to be on a large scale with a camping convoy of more than 20 vehicles, including support vehicles. It is also likely to encounter opposition from neighboring residents.

Along with the PAC-3's mobilization drills, the Defense Ministry will also deploy the PAC-3 to ASDF air defense missile units based at Narashino in Chiba Prefecture, Takeyama in Kanagawa Prefecture, and Kasumigaura in Ibaraki Prefecture. PAC-3 deployment to these bases will be completed by the end of March next year.

MD is a two-staged antimissile shield system to intercept projectiles flying toward Japan. At the initial stage, Aegis-equipped ships standing by in waters near Japan launch Standard Missile 3 (SM-3) missiles to intercept them in outer space. In case a sea-based SM-3 missile fails to hit a missile in flight, a ground-based PAC-3 missile will shoot it down. The SM-3's launch test will be also conducted in waters off Hawaii in December.

(4) Government fails to produce evidence supporting its claim that Japanese oil was not used in Iraq war

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Abridged slightly)
October 14, 2007

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Heated debate is underway on the alleged diversion of Japanese oil for use in the Iraq war in connection with an extension of the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling operation in the Indian Ocean. In the earlier House of Representatives Budget Committee sessions, the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto or DPJ) and other opposition parties persistently pursued the allegations, raising questions about the justification for the refueling operation. Although cabinet approval of new legislation to continue the refueling mission is planned for Oct. 17, the government has yet to offer clear answers to the questions.

The opposition bloc is focused on the fuel diversion allegation because it is directly linked to the propriety of the refueling operation conducted for the last six years under the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law.

If the MSDF were found to have refueled US vessels involved in the Iraq war by deviating from the purposes of the Antiterrorism Law, that would rock the grounds for the new legislation as well.

The question is when and what the MSDF-refueled US vessels did.

The vessels in question are the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk and the Aegis destroyer USS Paul Hamilton. On February 25, 2003, the MSDF supply vessel Tokiwa indirectly refueled the Kitty Hawk via the US oiler Pecos and directly refueled the Paul Hamilton.

The opposition bloc thinks it is natural to conclude that the US aircraft carrier joined Operation Southern Watch (OSW) that started in early March against Iraq.

OSW and the Iraq war are specified in the aircraft carrier's annual report for that year.

The Aegis destroyer is capable of carrying Tomahawk long-range cruise missiles that were used against Iraq. Kazuhiro Haraguchi and other DPJ lawmakers described the Aegis destroyer as a core player in the Iraq War.

Meanwhile, the government rejected the allegation that Japanese oil had been used in the Iraq war that started on March 20, 2003, with Defense Minister Ishiba saying, "The fuel from the MSDF was used up in February."

The government also rebutted that activities in the Persian Gulf do not necessarily equate with the Iraq war, citing the area of activities in the Antiterrorism Law basic plan that includes the Persian Gulf. The government stressed that the two vessels that received fuel from the MSDF were engaged in Operation Enduring Freedom.

The government is making preparations for releasing a report later this week concluding that Japanese oil was not diverted for use in the Iraq war. But the grounds for it remain unclear. The opposition bloc intends to press the government for clear evidence in upcoming Upper House Budget Committee sessions.

(5) Discontinuation of refueling operation would destroy Japan-US alliance

SANKEI (Page 15) (Abridged slightly)

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October 16, 2007

By Kazuya Sakamoto, professor, Osaka University

Why should the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean be continued? This question is often discussed from the likelihood that its discontinuation will undermine Japan's international position in the war on terrorism.

That seems true, to some extent. Many countries, including those who opposed the Iraq war, such as France and Germany, are engaged in dangerous security duties in the war on terrorism in Afghanistan.

Given the situation, Tokyo's decision to put an end to the MSDF's harsh yet low-risk mission due to domestic political circumstances would damage Japan's international reputation and influence, terribly disappointing other countries, especially Pakistan, whose maritime operation relies on Japanese oil. Pakistan's participation is politically vital in order to prevent the war on terrorism from turning into a clash between the Western and Islamic worlds.

In addition, the Indian Ocean is vital for Japan's oil imports. The US-led coalition naval forces receiving oil from Japan are contributing to the security of the Indian Ocean. This can explain why the international view of Japan is severe.

There are some other reasons why the refueling operation must be extended. If Tokyo is to suspend the refueling mission at this point, Japan would not only turn itself into an onlooker to the international security effort, as it did during the 1991 Gulf War, but also endanger the alliance with the United States.

This might really happen in view of Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto or DPJ) President Ichiro Ozawa's adamant opposition to extending the refueling mission for a lack of a direct UN resolution. Ozawa's argument is based on UN endorsement. His UN-centered diplomacy is out of line with the general interpretation of the Constitution and popular will. Contrary to his wishes, Ozawa's argument would probably work against Japan's participation in international security operations.

What really bothers me is his argument that because the war in Afghanistan was launched independently by the United States without a UN resolution, Japan was not allowed to assist its military action in the first place. His argument would fundamentally rock the Japan-US alliance. To the United States, the war in Afghanistan is a war in self-defense. What is the point of forming an alliance if a country cannot assist its ally in a war of self-defense?

True, under the US-Japan Security Treaty, Japan is not required to help the United States in areas outside the territories under the administration of Japan. Being an ally requires more than what is specified in a treaty, however. Although the security treaty is the backbone of the Japan-US alliance, it does not represent the entire alliance.

In the wake of 9/11, the Japanese government declared to stand by the United States after contemplating the devastating attack and decided to assist the United States in the war in Afghanistan to the extent permitted by the Constitution. Japan's support has been appreciated by the United States, and the Japan-US alliance has been elevated as a result. If Japan had turned a blind eye to the war in Afghanistan by saying it was America's war, the Japan-US alliance

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would have immediately followed a path toward becoming a mere shell.

A contingency determines the true worth of an alliance. An alliance that does not function properly in the wake of a contingency will cease to exist. The Japan-US alliance will rarely face such a contingency. Other countries are unlikely to launch an armed attack on the United States, the world's largest military power, or its ally, Japan. This makes it difficult for the two countries to confirm the value of their alliance.

9/11 was a rare contingency for the United States. The attack on the United States was something unexpected under the US-Japan Security Treaty that was revised 40 years ago.

The Japan-US alliance functioned well in the wake of 9/11, enabling the two countries to confirm the value of their alliance. Ozawa has called Japan's action a mistake. Such a statement by the head of the largest opposition party which has moved closer to taking the reins of government would raise serious questions about the true worth of the Japan-US alliance, and that might eventually result in an irreversible consequence.

(6) Debate on MSDF refueling ignoring national interest

With the end of question-and-answer sessions at the House of Representatives Committee on Audit and Oversight of Administration, the Lower House almost completed deliberations. In the interpellations at the Lower House plenary session and the Budget Committee, the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and other opposition parties grilled the government over allegations that fuel provided by the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) to a US aircraft carrier via a US supply ship was used in the Iraq operation. Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and his cabinet ministers adopted a low profile in responding questions. There was no scene in which Fukuda or other cabinet ministers reacted strongly to the opposition, emphasizing the need to continue the refueling operation. The term of the MSDF mission will end on Nov. 1.

Government lacks zeal

In a Lower House Budget Committee session on Oct. 9, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Policy Research Council Chairman Sadakazu Tanigaki said: "Japan relies on the Middle East for about 90 PERCENT of its energy supply. Preventing terrorists from running loose in that region will greatly benefit our country's national interests." Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura then responded: "When considering sea-lanes, the MSDF mission contributes also to national interests."

However, debate did not heat up. The DPJ had Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama appear at interpellations at the Lower House, and Deputy President Naoto Kan and Vice President Katsuya Okada at Budget Committee sessions. The three former DPJ heads concentrated their questions on the alleged diversion of Japan's fuel to the Iraq operation, as well as on information disclosure.

The three did not question the government as to what national interests Japan should pursue in Afghanistan, the Middle East and

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Central Asia, as well as the significance of the refueling mission. Also Prime Minister Fukuda and Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba did not enthusiastically talk about the importance of the refueling service in terms of national interests.

Japan Mine Action Service (JMAS) Chairman Tetsuya Nishimoto, former chairman of the Joint Staff Council, underscored:

"We should talk about a national security issue based on national interests. It should not be made a political issue. Continuing the refueling mission will meet our country's national interests."

Nishimoto stressed the importance of the refueling service from three viewpoints.

First, the refueling operation contributes to the stability of the Middle East oil transport route, which is vital for Japan's development and prosperity. Second, most of the roughly 40 countries taking part in the war on terror are free nations, so continuing the refueling operation will lead to maintaining cooperation with the international community, which can be called an "international freedom alliance." Third, the refueling mission is part of Japan's cooperation with the United States, an ally.

Why did the opposition not talk about national interests in Diet debate even though one of their roles in the debate is to pursue the government?

Wall of military secrecy

The opposition, by bringing up the alleged diversion of the fuel, however, was able to draw a correction and apology from Fukuda.

Fukuda on May 9, 2003, when he was chief cabinet secretary, stated on the alleged provision of fuel to USS Kitty Hawk in a press briefing:

"The Kitty Hawk consumes 200,000 gallons of fuel per day. She consumes immediately the amount of (fuel provided by the MSDF). So, it is realistically impossible that Japan's fuel was used in the Iraq operation."

However, it was discovered that the amount of fuel Japan provided to the US supply ship was 800,000 gallons. Fukuda then offered an apology. The US and Japanese governments have denied the alleged fuel diversion, but is it possible to use fuel provided by the MSDF for antiterrorism operations in and around Afghanistan alone? It is true that there remains the wall of military secrecy even if US forces provide Japan with information.

DPJ Lower House member Akihisa Nagashima, who is well-versed in security policy, stated:

"When thinking of the organization of US forces, the primary duty of US aircraft that received oil in the Indian Ocean is to carry out its operations under the multilateral fleet engaged in the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in and around Afghanistan."

He also continued, "If the same aircraft enters the Persian Gulf (using the remaining fuel), the aircraft will be automatically transferred to other units and be engaged in the Iraq operation."

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He said: "US aircraft must have conducted such an operation every day since the start of the Iraq war."

Nagashima's view is that the present Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, which the government hurriedly made in response to the terrorist attacks on the US in September 2001, was established in the face of common military sense. If it is true, Prime Minister Fukuda is caught in his own trap by his remark made in 2003. Therefore, a fruitless argument will likely continue at the Diet.

Is participation in ISAF unconstitutional?

DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa's argument to have the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) participate in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) created a controversy. He has not suggested a specific plan. It is uncertain whether his view will be included in a bill the party would come up with.

The government and ruling coalition reacted negatively to Ozawa's assertion, ignoring the conformity of SDF's participation in the ISAF with the SDF's deployment in Iraq.

Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura pointed out on Oct. 7: "As all of Afghanistan is like a combat zone, (participation in the ISAF) will be difficult based on the interpretation of the Constitution (which prohibits the use of arms overseas)." New Komeito leader Akihiro Ota in a press conference on the 12th stated his opposition to Ozawa's view.

The ruling camp has not taken a positive stance of consulting with the DPJ on the issue of Japan's participation in the ISAF.

Should a DPJ-led government be inaugurated and the DPJ insist on an UN-centered foreign and security policy, policy, including constitutional reinterpretation, would be greatly changed. On Oct. 7, Ishiba questioned (Ozawa's) argument that (SDF dispatch) will not violate Article 9 of the Constitution if the UN supports it. Since the government and ruling camp did not rebut the DPJ, they are now losing the best opportunity to hold a security debate.

True meaning of continuing MSDF refueling mission

A new antiterrorism bill will be approved in a cabinet meeting on the 17th. However, some in the ruling LDP and New Komeito have started calling for putting off enactment of the bill to the regular Diet session next year. Even a former LDP vice president, who now heads the ruling coalition's security project team, took a bearish attitude, noting, "If we take a second vote (with more than

two-thirds) in the Lower House, a censure motion against the prime minister will be adopted in the Upper House. As a result, the prime minister would be forced to dissolve the Lower House."

In the current session, the Fukuda cabinet is taking the approach of fighting with its back to the wall. An LDP source, however, said: "Lawmakers in the party mainstream probably want to close the extra session as early as possible and display their power in compiling a budget for next fiscal year. It is outrageous to dissolve the Lower House since the New Komeito also doesn't want to do so."

(7) Interview with Kang Sang Jung, professor at University of Tokyo: Weight of multinational relations increasing

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TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 25) (Full)
October 13, 2007

Japan should change conventional way of thinking to avoid further isolation

In December 2003, when Japan dispatched Self-Defense Force (SDF) troops to Iraq for the first time, former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone spoke on an NHK-TV program of the significance of the SDF dispatch, based on the government's intentions:

"If the United States suffers a setback in Iraq, there may be some changes in its stance of applying pressure on North Korea. In such a case, it might become difficult for Japan to resolve the abduction issue. ... The US should make concessions so that such industrialized countries (opposed to the Iraq war) as Germany, France and Russia will be able to work with the US. (To mediate between both sides,) Japan should cooperate with the US."

Citing such noble causes as "doing it in return for pressure against North Korea" and "offering advice as an ally" Nakasone emphasized the importance of Japan's cooperation in the US-led war on terrorism. In actuality, however, US-North Korea relations are improving despite there being no prospects in sight for a settlement of the abduction issue.

Kang expressed concern about the Japanese government's overly optimistic outlook, saying: "The US is a superpower capable of taking independent action. Although Japan-US relations are important, the US gives top priority to its own national interests in determining security and diplomatic policies and changes policies according to circumstances. I wonder how much Japan has been aware of this basis."

The US media has reported that a plan to bring about reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula is emerging as the last achievement for the Bush administration, which has been dogged by the situation in the Middle East.

In contrast to Japan's emphasis on the Japan-US alliance, the US has had concerns about Japan. In July, the House of Representatives adopted a resolution seeking an apology from Japan over the sexual exploitation of Asian women by the Japanese military during World War II - the so-called comfort women issue. According to Kang, the US was apprehensive about the former Abe administration's reactionary moves, fearing that such moves might reverse Japan's historical views about the Tokyo Trial, with Kang adding: "The US strongly feared that Japan would tackle the North Korea issue based on (the Abe administration's reactionary) historical perceptions."

Kang also defines "advice as an ally" as an "empty theory," comparing Japan-US relations with those between the US and the European Union (EU), saying:

"It is true that Germany and France are closely linked to the US under the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and they have a voice as representatives of the EU. But Japan has failed to establish relations with its neighbors, so it has to rely on the US, far from being an advisor to it."

The Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) has refueled warships in the Indian Ocean as part of Japan's cooperation in the war on terrorism.

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This principle, though, has begun to shake as Northeast Asia has been thrown turmoil.

Kang said: "The Japanese government has yet to emerge from the conventional way of viewing the world in the context of the Japan-US alliance. The ongoing war against terrorism is now apparently at a standstill. It might be essential for Japan as its friend to present different options to the US, without blindly following the US."

Even so, many persons voice concern that the US might apply pressure on Japan and that Japan might find itself more isolated in the international community if Japan refuses to continue the MSDF refueling mission. In the case of South Korea, too, its government has decided to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. The US has not criticized any of the countries whose troops have already left Iraq.

Kang said: "Some might say that if one objects to the US, the US will treat that person badly. But Japan defied the US over the comfort women issue. In the six-party talks, Japan has been isolated because of its stance of prioritizing the abduction issue over the nuclear issue."

More than 10 years have passed since the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc collapsed. Now that the US is stumbling over Afghanistan and Iraq, the world is becoming more multipolar, according to Kang, who added:

"The case of Northeast Asia is not exceptional. An agreement reached in the six-party talks advocates a mechanism to bring about stability and to ensure it in this region. The US, based on its failure in unilateral action led by neoconservatives, is now hopeful of establishing in this region a permanent security system and a multinational framework useful in dealing with such countries as Russia and China. In such a case, the Japan-US security arrangement will unavoidably become less significant."

Such a trend will urge Japan to alter its conventional Cold War mentality whereby it has treated the Japan-US alliance as though it were a golden rule. Kang made the following conclusion:

"Japan-US relations will continue to be important. But Japan now needs to have a way of thinking flexible enough to give consideration to multinational relations, in addition to Japan-US relations. By doing so, Japan might be able to find a way to correct the current one-sided relations between Japan and the US."

(8) Reconsideration on fight against terrorism: Interview with Tokyo University Professor Kang Sangjung -- Dead angle of Japan-US alliance; Japan caught in its own trap in foreign relations by characterizing abduction issue as major premise; Beginning of end of cold war

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 24) (Full)
October 13, 2007

Japan has stated its determination to keep the Japan-US alliance firm as its realistic reason to join the war on terror. In particular, Japan shifted to a cooperative stance in the war on terror believing that US pressure would be essential to settling the issue of abductions of Japanese nationals, to which North Korea admitted the year following the 9-11 terrorist attacks on the US.

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However, the improvement in US-DPRK relations last year has caused the abduction issue to retreat into the background. Now, even the possibility of Japan's isolation is being talked about. Tokyo Shimbun asked Tokyo University Professor Kang Sangjung about whether there is a "dead angle" or weak spot in the Japan-US alliance.

Recent developments in the wake of the 6th six-party talks late last month and the inter-Korean summit early this month have changed the situation centered on the DPRK. Participants in the six-party talks confirmed that the disablement of the DPRK's nuclear facilities and the removal of the nation from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism should be implemented concurrently. Leaders of the two Koreas at the summit declared economic cooperation along the coast of the Yellow Sea and preparations to end the Korean War.

Commenting on the series of the moves involving the two Koreas, Kang noted: "The two agreements are complementary. They indicate the beginning of the end of the cold-war structure, which has been in place in northeastern Asia for 60 years."

He continued: "The DPRK has recognized South Korea, which has not yet signed the armistice agreement (1953) on the Korean War, as a partner to build a peace system and the two countries have started moving toward signing a peace agreement. Regarding US-DPRK relations, Secretary of State Rice may visit Pyongyang, and the US is likely to remove the nation from its list of states sponsoring terrorism. What comes next will be normalization of ties between the US and the DPRK."

Kang analyzed the agreements: "Each agreement has some insufficient points. There is criticism that nothing will move forward if it is only South and North Korea. This criticism is correct. However, both leaders understand that. What is important is that they are aware of their role to expedite the multilateral talks."

On the other hand, there has been little progress on the abductions of Japanese nationals. What do you think the reason for that is? Kang replied: "South Korea and North Korea are making their moves in a multinational framework. However, that is not the case with the Japanese government. It must search for ways to settle the abduction issue in a grand design. However, it bases its actions on the stand that settling the abduction is the premise for all other issues. It is caught on its own foreign policy trap."

With the argument rampant that Japan is being left behind, Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura, after his meeting with Rice on Sept. 22, proudly said that he had obtained an assurance from the US that it would consider the abduction issue when it delists the DPRK from its list of state sponsors of terrorism. However, Rice during a press conference two days after the meeting with Machimura indicated her intention to separate the abduction issue from the delisting process.

US switches its policy to bringing DPRK into fold

Concerning the real intention of the US, Kang pointed out the switch in its DPRK policy. John Bolton, a hard-line neo-conservative, was the US ambassador to the UN when North Korea conducted a nuclear test last October and the UN the imposed sanctions against it. Kang said, "The US at that time was employing a policy of containing the DPRK with an eye on replacing its regime." However, following the devastating defeat of the ruling Republican Party in the midterm

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election last November, Bolton was forced to quit. Kang said: "The US is now considering making the Korean Peninsula its own strategic base, by bringing the DPRK into the fold instead of containing it. The signing of a free trade agreement (FTA) with South Korea in April follows this logic. The US must remove the wall left over from the cold war that separates South Korea and the DPRK in order to realize its new strategy."

The biggest obstacle to its attempt to end the cold war is the North Korean nuclear issue. Kang said, "Once the DPRK's denuclearization is verifiable, it would mean that the final obstacle to the US delisting the DPRK as a state sponsor of terrorism has disappeared. Settling the abduction issue cannot become an absolute condition. That is the meaning of the words 'one working group must not affect progress of efforts by another working group' having been categorically mentioned in the six-party talks in February."

(9) Foreign trainees: Justice Ministry to stipulate compliance rule;

Guidelines for accepting foreign trainees to be toughened

MAINICHI (Page 3) (Full)
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The training program for foreign workers is harshly criticized as serving as means to use foreign workers as cheap labor. The Justice Ministry Immigration Bureau yesterday decided to further tighten the existing guidelines by stipulating a compliance rule to be imposed on domestic entities that accept foreign trainees and unlawful practices in concrete terms. The ministry will revise the present guidelines before year's end to improve the application of the system.

At present, there are approximately 160,000 foreign trainees, with hosting entities, such as companies and cooperative associations, numbering about 15,000. There have been many troubles involving foreign trainees at the training places. For instance, there was a case incident last year in which a Chinese trainee assaulted three employees of his host entity, because he was dissatisfied with the way they treated him. The number of entities recognized as having engaged in unlawful practices reached a record high of 229, about 250 PERCENT higher than the number registered in 2003. The number of trainees who went missing reached 2,201, approximately 420 PERCENT higher than the number marked in 1999 (513).

As a main feature, the draft amendment incorporates in concrete terms the considerations host entities must give and lists the unlawful practices -- although such were also included in the present guidelines, they were in abstract terms.

Considerations include bans on such practices as host entities accepting foreign trainees through brokers, deducting portions of their wages and prohibiting foreign trainees from going out, with the aim of preventing them from running away, and an obligation to use foreign trainees' mother tongues for employment contracts. As unlawful practices, the draft amendment cites the following cases in concrete terms: (1) signing secret contracts in order to pay lower wages; (2) forcing foreign trainees to work overtime; and (3) taking away passports without the consent of trainees.

SCHIEFFER